

Document 15

New Lenox School District 122

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February 13, 2001



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DISTRICT #1

Mr. Peter J. Godowski
Illinois Department
of Transportation
Bureau of Programming
201 W. Center Court
Schaumburg, IL 60196-1096

Dear Mr. Godowski:

On behalf of the Board of Education of New Lenox School District 122, I am formally submitting this letter as testimony in support of the I-355 tollway extension. In light of the heavy property tax burden upon residents of our school district, the School Board feels that a broader based commercial and industrial tax base would alleviate many of our fiscal problems in offering adequate educational programs in the future.

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History shows us that good transportation systems are good for communities. We hope that this highway system attracts and provides incentives for new and rapid commercial and industrial growth. We wholeheartedly support your efforts to accomplish this task. We would further ask your support in partnering with the Village of New Lenox, the New Lenox Township, and the County of Will in providing a safe and convenient sidewalk approach to our school site, which will be in close proximity to the clover leaf configuration at I-80 and the termination of I-355.

We look forward to working closely with you and would be pleased to answer any questions that you may have for us. Thank you for your continued cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Thomas L. Mullins, Ed.D.
Superintendent

TLM:jop

The mission of the New Lenox Schools is to promote academic excellence.

Document 16

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PUBLIC COMMENT DISTRICT #1 FAP ROUTE 340 (I-355 SOUTH EXTENSION) FEBRUARY 26, 2001

In reviewing the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for this project, it is apparent that several issues have been given inadequate consideration, or virtually no consideration at all. It is our contention that in failing to address these issues, IDOT's assertion that the I-355 South Extension is the preferred transportation alternative for northern Will County and Lemont is completely false.

Among the issues that are inadequately addressed or completely ignored are:

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1. **LOCAL TRANSPORTATION NEEDS** This Draft SFEIS states the primary need of this tollroad will be to provide transportation to suburban job centers, and in so doing, gives almost no consideration to the daily local transportation needs of our residents to shop at our local stores, to attend our local schools, and to participate in local recreational activities. Even IDOT's unbelievably conservative estimates (the most recent land use plan for Route 6 and Cedar in New Lenox estimates 192,000 daily car trips along Route 6, a number seen nowhere in the Draft SFEIS) of cars on local arterials show increased traffic as a result of this extension. How does this help local travel times? Where is the study of the environmental impact of the increased traffic on local arterials?

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2. **REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES** Who decided which alternatives would be logical and viable alternatives to the extension of I-355? It is clear to even those among us with no engineering background, that the Lemont Bypass Alternative and the Enhanced Arterial Alternative were chosen and designed with the ultimate intent of making FAP 340 the only road in town, so to speak. Why was The Action Plan developed collaboratively by the Environmental Law and Policy Center, Business and Professional People in the Public Interest, and local residents, not considered as a viable alternative, even though it was presented to IDOT and ISTHA as such and would greatly improve existing arterials and transit lines?

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3. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF ALTERNATIVES** What is the point of an Environmental Impact Statement if it provides no comparisons to the environmental impact of a tollroad? Were the environmental impacts of alternatives ignored because they would illustrate the devastating impacts of the proposed tollroad? Obviously, the environmental consequences of the tollroad would look much worse if directly compared to the lesser adverse impacts on water quality, open space, forest preserves, wetlands and air quality of other alternatives. Isn't consideration of the environmental impacts of alternatives a federal requirement?

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4. **POLLUTION OF GROUNDWATER RESOURCES** The Draft EFEIS outlines plans to mitigate polluted runoff from the proposed I-355 extension by diverting such runoff to

Document 16

local streams. Not only are these plans completely unacceptable from an ecological standpoint, but in the case of Spring Creek at the southern end of the proposed extension in Homer Township, such mitigation plans portend a water supply disaster for the east side of Joliet. Spring Creek is within the discharge area for a unique shallow aquifer from which Joliet pumps a great deal of water on a daily basis. This sand and gravel aquifer is known as the Hadley Valley Aquifer, and because of its basal sand thickness of more than 100 feet, is extremely vulnerable to surface contamination, and as such, is within a spill protection area. Under normal conditions, Spring Creek acts as a sort of pump for this aquifer, drawing water away from the aquifer. But in a flood situation, Spring Creek would serve as a source of contamination for this aquifer, and the runoff from the proposed extension would go directly into the drinking water supply of the east side of Joliet! In addition, nothing could be found in the Draft EFEIS that examines the direct impact of spray from the extension on the Hadley Valley Aquifer. THIS IS AN EXTREMELY UNIQUE GEOLOGICAL FORMATION AND EXTREMELY VULNERABLE WATER SUPPLY FOR THE CITY OF JOLIET. You cannot divert the runoff into Spring Creek and hope everything just flows away. Nowhere in the EFEIS is there a mitigation plan for a contaminated drinking water supply!

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5. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF ENSUING DEVELOPMENT** Nowhere within the Draft EFEIS are environmental impacts of the development which has already occurred and which is planned in anticipation of the proposed extension, by communities in and near the corridor, considered. It is completely irresponsible not to consider the impacts of this development, and in fact, makes the statement of the environmental impacts of the extension in isolation completely wrong and a lie. As an example, consider the fact that the village of New Lenox is currently planning a waste treatment plant on Spring Creek, directly upstream from the aforementioned vulnerable Hadley Valley Aquifer. The treatment plant will serve the major commercial and residential developments being planned for the area directly north of the Route 6/I-355 interchange. Nowhere in the Draft EFEIS are the impacts of the waste treatment plant or the I-355 interchange development considered. The impacts of the road and the related development in all of the areas surrounding the road will be devastating to the environment and to our quality of life. That must be the real reason the Draft EFEIS considers the impacts of the road in isolation.

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6. **NOISE AND SAFETY IMPACTS OF FAP 340 ON SCHOOLS** The Draft EFEIS fails in its consideration of the noise and safety impacts on the students of at least 3 schools currently within or being built adjacent to the FAP 340 corridor. The Old Quarry Middle School, the new Homer Township Junior High, and the new New Lenox Junior High will all be detrimentally impacted in terms of air quality, noise levels and student safety by this tollroad extension. However, only Old Quarry Middle School is shown in maps of the proposed extension, with minor considerations of the impact this road will have on students traveling to and from school and within the school. The Homer Township and New Lenox schools are not even considered. Does this mean that if we ignore the impacts, they won't occur?

Document 16

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7. **BLACK PARTRIDGE WOODS FOREST PRESERVE** The reuse of a study of the environmental impacts of the proposed extension is most evident in the section considering the impacts upon the Black Partridge Woods Forest Preserve. A habitat for numerous endangered plant and animal species, the gist of the statement about the impact of the tollroad on this environmentally sensitive preserve is that since poor planning in the surrounding development has already caused major deterioration in water and wetland quality in the preserve, the road can't make it much worse. What an ingenious mitigation plan! How much are the environmental engineers on this project paid for such groundbreaking ideas? We have resident elementary school students who realize you can't justify making things worse just because the environment is already being degraded. What is the point of doing an EIS, if all that results is an admission that the environment, even the most ecologically sensitive areas, will be devastated?

The point of this commentary should be clear. The thousands of members of Lincolnway SCAT throughout Lemont and Will County DO NOT WANT THE SOUTH EXTENSION OF I-355. THE REVISED EFEIS IS A SHAM DESIGNED ONLY TO CHEERLEAD FOR THE EXTENSION AND SHOULD NOT BE APPROVED. Go back to the drawing board and try doing it the right way. Maybe the third time will be the charm.

Gaylyn Grimm
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